

# 2010

## New Partners for Smart Growth Lifetime Achievement Award

**Ron Sims, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; former King County Executive**

**Ron Sims** was one of the first local government leaders to understand the importance of “growing smart” by integrating health, land use and transportation planning to create walkable, transit-oriented and sustainable communities that provide healthier lifestyle choices for all residents. He was also one of the first U.S. leaders to apply equity and social justice factors in government policy and decision-making.

Sims served as King County Executive from 1997 until 2009, when he was appointed Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Development by President Obama.

As Deputy Secretary, he is responsible for the new Sustainable Communities Initiative that, for the first time, acknowledges the impact of the built environment on energy consumption and global warming. The initiative fosters sustainable development and lowers transportation costs by integrating transportation and housing planning to maximize choices for residents and businesses. The initiative uses HUD’s prominent role in the housing industry to catalyze the retrofit of existing homes and buildings and promote environmentally sustainable home construction.

A Spokane, Washington native and lay minister who worked with youths on the streets of downtown Seattle, Sims co-chaired the Committee to End Homelessness in King County. His commitment to expanding housing for the homeless and working poor made him well-suited to HUD. Under his leadership, King County was the first county in the nation to earn the Robert L. Woodson Jr. Affordable Communities Award from HUD.

As County Executive, Sims became renowned for his collaborative approach to problem-solving. This approach contributed to numerous achievements, including national recognition for his focus on climate change. Under his leadership, King County Metro Transit and Sound Transit became one of the largest, greenest transit systems in the nation, with the country’s largest fleet of articulated hybrid buses. In 2006, Metro Transit became the first county and transit agency to join the Chicago Climate Exchange and account for its greenhouse gas emissions under a voluntary cap-and-trade system. Soon after, Sims helped start Climate Communities, a coalition of cities and counties across the country advocating for federal action on climate change.

A leader in launching the effort to save Puget Sound, Sims expanded the state’s largest wastewater system, establishing state-of-the-art treatment facilities. He created the first countywide flood protection plan to avoid Katrina-like catastrophes. He worked with builders, environmental groups and cities to protect diminishing agricultural and timber areas while focusing growth in the cities — 96% of King County’s residential growth is now in the urban area. Further, he conserved more than 135,000 acres of open space.

“To get the job done, I knew we would have to bring together everyone — environmentalists, developers, community leaders — to create a strategy to preserve the livability of our region. It didn’t take long to realize we shared a common interest in clean air, water and healthy communities.”

— Ron Sims, HUD Deputy Secretary

